

EMS Radio Event
Sept 4, 2013
Sea Bright, NJ

On behalf of Governor Chris Christie, I thank everyone for joining us this afternoon. It's appropriate we are in Sea Bright this afternoon to talk about emergency preparedness in a town that was hit so hard by Sandy, and one that is working day and night on its recovery. I know that Governor Christie was here last week to meet with Mayor Long and area businesses to highlight how far you have come – and to recognize there is still a long way to go. I congratulate everyone in Sea Bright from the Mayor to the residents to the local business owners for working so hard to make this recovery possible and for doing all you can to get everyone's lives back to normal at the Jersey Shore.

Today, as we recognize September as National Emergency Preparedness Month, we take another step forward in strengthening our state's ability to respond to large scale emergencies by providing to our County EMS Coordinators, 21 new hand-held, two-way walkie talkie radios that will allow them to better coordinate disaster response. The radios were funded with \$118,000 in Social Services Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and it marks the first investment of federal Superstorm Sandy funds by the New Jersey Department of Health into our State's EMS system.

During the last several years, whether it was Irene, Sandy or violent storms in South Jersey and in other places across the state, we have all seen the impact that a communication breakdown can have on emergency response. Which is why these new radios are so important – they are the primary means of communication when landlines and cellphone systems fail. Last year, while responding to Sandy, it became clear that there was a need for additional radio support for our county partners to enhance communications among County EMS, their staff and the state.

Currently, each county has one of these radios, with this new additional radio they are receiving today each county will be able to ensure 24/7 communication between key EMS staff and all levels of government. The new radios will facilitate the coordination of assistance in New Jersey. It will allow EMS coordinators to request and send resources such as ambulance strike team deployment for out of county responses. It will also provide direct communication between County EMS Coordinators, state emergency response and my Department. So whether our County EMS Coordinators are evacuating private residences, hospitals or nursing homes or establishing teams for medical shelters or answering 911 calls for help they will be better able to communicate with each other, their staff, the state and other emergency agencies and personnel. In short, these radios will improve our EMS system capabilities, improve communications and undoubtedly help save lives.

As I said earlier, September is National Preparedness Month. As we all know, the time to prepare is before the next disaster strikes. I urge everyone who is here today and all residents of the State of New Jersey to take steps to protect their health and safety now for the next emergency. Have an emergency kit ready. Think about your healthcare needs and include medications in that kit. Learn how to safely use generators. Make an emergency plan in case you have to evacuate and be sure to stay informed and get involved.

The Department of Health's website nj.gov/health has a wealth of information on emergency preparedness so I ask everyone to visit our site to learn more about this issue.